

SOAR Navigators: Making a Difference

In the fall of 2011, SOAR Navigators began meeting with students who were first-time freshmen and in two or more developmental classes. Navigators, defined by some as “advisors on steroids,” use an intrusive advising process while working with students who are typically most at-risk. The Navigators follow a detailed process for advising students based on the *TIDES: Targeted Intervention for Developmental Education Students* model. *TIDES* states that “a combination of cognitive, affective, and personal information about students should be used to develop integrated intervention plans.” The process used by navigators is outlined below.

- Step 1: Meet students immediately after COMPASS testing to begin the relationship.
- Step 2: Follow up and contact the student before S.T.A.R.T. Up Day/Registration.
- Step 3: Meet students again at S.T.A.R.T. Up Day and help with registration.
- Step 4: Conduct a detailed initial interview, preferably before classes start, to learn about the student's responsibilities outside of school, review time management, and help find class locations.
- Step 5: Complete SOAR Institute paperwork including a contract, a goal setting form, and a class/work/study schedule.
- Step 6: Hold regular meetings with students throughout the semester.

Initial results from the intervention provided by navigators are encouraging. After one semester of navigating, 82% of students returned for classes the following term and 51% returned one year later. The pass rates for students assigned to navigators were more than 25% higher than the average pass rates of developmental courses as a whole. Twenty-one percent of the initial group of students advised by navigators were taking all college level courses after one year.

The initial group of navigators who worked with the students referenced include Sophia Everett, LaTonya Robinson, and Jan Rogers. Navigators Madison Humann, Tim Law, and Alicia Walker have since been added so that these services can be expanded.

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SHELTON STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Referrals for a Navigator

Beginning in October 2012, the SOAR Institute began accepting referrals from faculty and staff for students who may need a navigator. The requirements for referral include the following:

- 1) COMPASS results that place the student in two or more developmental courses: ENG 092, ENG 093, MTH 090, MTH 098, RDG 084, RDG 085.
- 2) The student's program of study is any academic area or one of the following technical areas: Child Development, Cosmetology, Culinary, Management and Supervision, OAD, or Nursing.

The referral form can be found on the Intranet under SOAR Institute > SOAR Institute Documents. Once completed, scan and email the form to Annette Cook at acook@sheltonstate.edu or deliver to Office 2365.

As some experts have pointed out, “retention is an institutional, not a program responsibility. The same is true with developmental education.”

Noel, L., Levitz, R., Saluri, D., & Associates. (1985) *Increasing student retention: Effective programs and practices for reducing the drop out rate.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Student Opinion Survey Results for Orientation to College

Student feedback from Fall 2012 show that 97.2% would recommend ORI 101 to incoming freshman. More than 93% indicated that they felt more connected to SSCC after completing the course, and 91.2% said the course increased their confidence as a college student. Here are additional comments.

“This course helped me get a better understanding of college. It helped me complete my transition from high school to college. EVERY FRESHMAN SHOULD TAKE THIS CLASS!!!”

“This class was very helpful. I enjoyed the activities and guest speakers. It was all informative, and I would suggest every freshman take this class, not only to become familiar with the school itself, but to understand the atmosphere of a college student.”

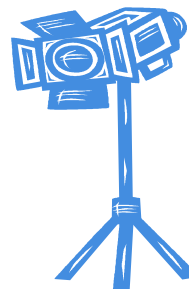
“The class was great and easy to understand. The material is very useful and much-needed for all freshmen.”

“I have really enjoyed the class and have learned a lot.”

“I would advise anybody to take this class because it is very helpful.”

“Love this class!!!”

“Guest speakers opened my eyes to things I did not know.”



Personnel Spotlight

A Conversation with Kathryn Gidley

Each edition of *SOARING* features one SOAR staff member. This edition spotlights Basic Study Skills and Orientation to College instructor, Kathryn Gidley.

What prompted you to apply for this position at Shelton State?

"I've wanted to work in the collegiate setting since I was in college. After eighteen years in the high school and elementary school setting, the time was right. My background in special education and administration seemed like a perfect fit for the position, so I applied."

Where did you work before coming to Shelton State? What was your position? What specifically did that job include? "I worked in the Tuscaloosa County School System. I was the Assistant Principal at Walker Elementary School. I was responsible for anything and everything that needed to be done to promote and maintain a positive learning environment for the students, faculty, and staff. I worked alongside the principal, Mrs. Patricia Johnson, assisting in the day to day operating functions of maintaining and running an elementary school. Prior to my position as an assistant principal, I was a special education teacher and cheerleading coach at Tuscaloosa County High School."

Where did you attend college? What degrees have you earned?

"I attended college at The University of Alabama. I was a cheerleader for four years while at Alabama, serving as captain my junior and senior years—ROLL TIDE! I have an Educational Specialist degree (Ed.S.) in Educational Leadership, Certification in Education Administration, master's degree (M.A.) in Mild Learning Behavior Disorders, and a bachelor's degree (B.S.) in Specific Learning Disabilities."

Tell us where you grew up and what led you to pursue this profession. "I grew up in Cullman, Alabama. I served as a teachers' assistant while in high school, working with students who had mild to moderate disabilities. I enjoyed the one-on-one interaction with the students and was just as excited as they were when they learned a difficult concept that we had been working on. I decided my senior year in high school that I would pursue a degree in special education so that I could serve other students who struggled in the educational environment—and celebrate with them their joys and triumphs! While earning my Master's degree at Alabama, I served as the graduate assistant cheerleading coach. I knew during this time that when the time was right, I wanted to work at the collegiate level, serving students pursuing their goals and dreams in the post-secondary educational setting."

Tell us about your family. "My husband is Kent Gidley. He is the Director of Athletic Photography at The University of Alabama. We have three beautiful daughters. M'Kay is in 5th grade at Englewood Elementary School and is a Level 7 gymnast. K'Ten is in 4th grade at Englewood and is an avid piano player and participates in adventure races. Karis J'Myn is in 2nd grade at Taylorville Primary School and is a Level 3 gymnast. Kent and I are Resource Parents for Big Oak Ranch, a Christian home for abused and neglected children. My brother is the Head Golf Coach at Florida State University (Go FSU Golf!); he got his start playing and coaching golf at Wallace State Community College in Hanceville, AL. My mom is

retired from Wallace State Community College, and my dad is retired from parks and recreation."

What are some of your interests and hobbies? "I love spending time with my family. I enjoy reading and going to the beach and the mountains (traveling in general). I enjoy going on mission trips and in addition to local and regional trips, I have traveled to Africa, Italy, and Spain through International World Changers. I enjoy coaching and working with young athletes. I am a member of Big Sandy Baptist Church where I serve as one of the AWANA Game Time Leaders, Children's Church Worship Teachers, and on the video committee."

What has been the most challenging thing about working at Shelton State? "A challenge that comes to mind is the general difference between high school/elementary school and college. At the beginning of August 2011, 6 year olds were coming to my office crying because they missed their mommy; at the end of August, I'm instructing college students who no longer live at home and are experiencing an amount of freedom they've never experienced before. My schedule was another adjustment I had to get used to. Scheduling in a K-12 school system is much different than in the college setting."

What has been the most rewarding thing about working in SOAR?

"While I miss 1st graders running to my office with a huge smile on their face ready to read me a book and coaching high school athletes, I'm thoroughly enjoying the collegiate setting and being able to establish relationships with students starting new chapters in their lives. The SOAR Institute is very service oriented with a focus on the student and his/her success. It is rewarding to work with a group of individuals who put the students first. The SOAR staff is committed to providing dedicated support for the students at Shelton State."

Is there any additional information you would like to share? "I would like to challenge all of our students at Shelton State to take advantage of all of the many services and resources that are offered at SSCC. In order to get the most of your college experience, involve yourself in "college life." Support the athletics programs as well as the arts, join a student organization, get involved! Discipline yourself to attend class regularly, come to class on time, and be prepared. It is no surprise that students who attend class and are prepared are much more likely to pass and achieve their dreams. You are responsible for You! Take advantage of this opportunity and make the most of it. You can succeed!"



Kathryn Gidley